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AUTHOR Amstutz, Donna D.; Colin, Scipio A. J., III; Schied, Fred; Sheared, Vanessa

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ABSTRACT

Debate over the benefits and detriments of adult education faculty being integrally involved in K-12 teacher preparation programs has grown as increasing numbers of U.S. colleges and universities eliminate or consider eliminating their adult education graduate programs. The debate centers around the following positions: (1) adult education faculty should be involved in teacher preparation programs based on theoretical connections between K-12 and adult education learning theories; (2) adult education faculty should be involved in teacher preparation programs based on realistic financial and administrative constraints in colleges of education; (3) adult education faculty should not be involved in teacher preparation programs based on the uniqueness of adult education theory and practice; and (4) adult education faculty should not be involved in teacher preparation programs based on separate experiences and institutions. Finding a niche for adult education programs in colleges of education involves confronting tensions between these competing positions and determining where compromises may be made. Crucial to all positions is the inclusion of the concept of lifelong learning as a part of a college of education's foundational mission. This type of dialogue may even be viewed as a positive element for the discipline of adult education, causing the field to continually clarify its purpose and reaffirm its philosophical beliefs about educational practice. (Contains 19 references.) (MN)

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Donna D. Amstutz
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Lifelong Learning: A Debate Regarding the Appropriateness of Adult Education Faculty's Participation in Teacher Preparation Programs

Donna D. Amstutz, University of Wyoming, USA
Scipio A.J. Colin, III, National Louis University, USA
Fred Schied, Penn State University, USA
Vanessa Sheared, San Francisco State University, USA

Abstract: The academic study of adult education remains in a precarious position in schools of education because adult education is often viewed as neither necessary nor integral to the colleges' main mission: usually the preparation of beginning teachers.

During seventy plus years of existence as an academic discipline in the United States, the field of adult education has spent a great deal of time examining itself as both an emerging and distinct field of study. The emphasis has been to extend the legitimacy of education as a field of study beyond K-12 education, and central to this argument was the articulation of differences between adult educational practices and that of other educators, such as public school teachers. The reverse corollary, that K-12 teacher preparation could be enhanced by contributions from adult education, was never suggested.

As Knowles (1970) was proposing andragogy as an alternative to pedagogy, and as members of the adult education professorate were investigating the "deschooled" society, ala Illich (1970), the distinction between adult education and K-12 education throughout the 1970s and 1980s was purposefully made. Houle (1972), on the other hand, maintained that educational systems, adult and non-adult, had much in common. Ironically, while academic programs in adult education attempted to achieve legitimacy and support through distinction, an ever-increasing number of K-12 educators were embracing a learner-centered philosophy and espousing tenets of lifelong learning; ideals advocated by adult educators since the 1920s. Primarily, however, when education as a body of knowledge was presented, it was as a comparison of how adult education was different than and distinctly separate from K-12 education theory and practice.

In a 1988 Commission of Professors of Adult Education report, it was noted that nine threats to adult education existed: one was isolation from other fields and disciplines, another was lack of commitment to other programs or departments with which they were affiliated. Still, no mention was made about the merits of adult education faculty being involved in K-12 teacher preparation programs as a rather natural evolution of a commitment to lifelong learning in schools of education.

Problems were beginning to appear nationally in the growth and maintenance of adult education graduate programs. The adult education graduate programs at University of Chicago, University of Michigan, and Syracuse were eliminated. Programs at Montana State, Penn State, and most recently, in New Zealand, were being considered for elimination. Strategies to keep existing graduate programs alive began to be studied.

This symposium considers the benefits and detriments of adult education faculty being integrally involved in teacher preparation programs as part of their professorial responsibilities. It could be argued that adult education faculty's involvement in teacher preparation programs is appropriate based on the theoretical connections between K-12 and adult education learning

theory. In addition, this involvement may mediate some of the financial and administrative constraints in colleges of education. On the other hand, it can be argued that adult education faculty should not be involved in teacher preparation programs because of the uniqueness of adult education theory and practice and that adult education faculty focus on learning experiences outside the institutionalized forms of schooling. Dialogue on this issue now may provide insights into how to strengthen many adult education graduate programs to avoid downsizing and elimination. The policy implications which may emerge from this examination address the current budgetary crisis that is increasingly forcing adult education graduate programs to justify their existence in colleges of education.

Adult education faculty should be involved in teacher preparation programs based on theoretical connections between K-12 and adult education learning theory

The implications of living in a constantly evolving information world are causing many educators to rethink how they look at teaching and learning throughout the lifespan. An ever increasing number of K-12 educators embrace a learner-centered philosophy and espouse tenets of lifelong learning, concepts advocated by adult educators since the 1920s, and speak of the need to reform education. Therefore it seems an appropriate time for all educators to work together in their conceptualizations of education and schooling for a new century.

Constructivist and cooperative learning are based on the same theoretical principles regardless of the age of the learners. K-12 faculty have been using group processes in their classrooms for many years, probably since Dewey (1916) expounded on the virtues of helping students discover knowledge for themselves. Constructivism, the creation of meaning by the students themselves, reflects adult education's interest in encouraging students to actively generate their own knowledge In the many cases where K-12 teacher preparation programs remain teacher-centered, adult educators can help K-12 faculty move gradually to a student centered environment where it is applicable.

The basic biological processes affecting memory, scaffolding, and creation of meaning appear to be the same in learners of all ages. What else would explain why in adult learning theory courses, much emphasis is given to the same behavioral, cognitive, and affective learning theories as those discussed in teacher preparation programs?

Adult educators encourage the maturation of the student through the teaching/learning process and reaffirm that excellent teachers do not teach the subject but teach the student. Excellent instructors at all levels employ the curriculum as a means to empower the students and not as an end in and of itself. Therefore, educators of all ages may have more to gain from an appreciation of similarities than from dwelling on differences.

Adult education faculty should be involved in teacher preparation programs based on realistic financial and administrative constraints in colleges of education

Given the current climate in higher education that demands integration, accountability, and justification for all academic disciplines, adult education graduate programs are frequently being asked to provide a rationale for their continued inclusion in colleges of education. In higher administrative circles, adult education graduate programs often become a potential cost saving area that could be cut without sacrificing the "real" mission of the college, which is to prepare elementary and secondary teachers. Is the work that we do as adult educators so peripheral or marginal in society that administrators in colleges of education and higher

education can summarily eliminate adult education programs, such that these programs would never be missed - only to become a voice in the wilderness?

What would it mean to be so marginal that one would never be missed? As early as 1958, Clark raised this issue in relation to funding and the ways in which adult education programs were situated in institutions of higher education. Others have gone on to discuss what it means to be marginal or marginalized in institutions, adult education programs and society (Devlin, 1982, Fernau, 1983, Friere, 1979; hooks, 1984, Lovett, 1982; Sheared, 1992, 1998; Sheared, et.al, 2000; Stromquist, 1988). If adult educators are themselves marginal, how then can we begin to help other marginalized group members take control over their own political, social and economic realities?

How do we as adult education faculty - marginalized as a result of funding and positionalities in institutions of higher education - begin to create critical change in our institutions of higher education, so that we no longer appear as voices in the wilderness?

Adult education faculty's involvement in teacher preparation programs may be one of the strongest strategies to protect adult education graduate programs. Adult education faculty should serve on curriculum committees for teacher preparation programs and emphasize lifelong learning for teachers and those individuals served by these future teachers. Not only must adult education faculty weave themselves into the fabric that defines the mission of their school, but they must also generate enough credit hours (often through teacher preparation programs) to support their discipline. Adult educators bring experience in serving nontraditional students and distance education to teacher education programs that are currently expanding to meet the coming shortage of teachers. Surprisingly, even the 1960 Adult Education handbook mentions the possibility of joint appointments of faculty who can teach both adults and youth as possible solutions to space, money and facilities problems (Knowles, 1960). Adult education faculty must remember that it is not just about the survival of programs but the survival of those who might remain in the wilderness, if their programs or they as faculty cease to exist in institutions of higher education. Faculty must remember that adult education's very premise and history rests in the provision of educational opportunities for those who have been left out as a result of their language, race, economic or political positions in society and institutions. So, it is up to adult education faculty in institutions of higher education to survive, by whatever means necessary, including participation in teacher preparation programs. And in so doing, then those voices in the wilderness, lost not due to their own doing but to multiple "isms" in our society and institutions, will be enjoined with us to create critical change.

Adult education faculty should not be involved in teacher preparation programs based on the uniqueness of adult education theory and practice

Some adult educators often see "knowledge" creation as a relative, transient, and constantly evolving process. As such "knowledge" is not viewed as a fixed, absolute state of universal facts so established that ideas, concepts and theories are beyond critical critique. Conversely, many K-12 faculty tend to view knowledge as a specific content that needs to be "taught" to students in order to make them more "knowledgeable." This view is promoted by Bloom (1987) and Hirsch (1987) in the form of prescribed cultural "knowledge" which by its very nature and design is ethnocentric since it presents one cognitive tradition as better and more important than knowledge from other traditions. It is this "knowledge" that schools are often responsible for teaching. Additionally, the current "back to the basics" movement in public schools endorses this view. Adult education professors often teach in ways that challenge the

"authority" and "ownership" of knowledge of educators at all levels. They may push their students to question traditional views of knowledge.

Typically, adult educators do not wish to engage in this kind of knowledge dissemination (covertly or overtly). K-12 faculty often require static objectives that predetermine all learning outcomes, whereas adult education faculty are more likely to include learning outcomes defined by the learner and to recognize those that emerge out of the teaching-learning process.

There is a distinct and significant difference between pedagogical collaboration and conceptual corruption. We cannot become conceptual chameleons, changing every time the economic winds blow in order to protect our academic programs. We are still engaged in an ideological struggle in attempting to answer the two salient questions that have confronted us since our inception: "Whom do we serve?" and "How can we best serve them?" Are we to be jacks of all trades and masters of none? As we ponder the answers, as we must, let us be mindful of the meaning of the message embedded in an old Zulu saying: "Copying everybody else all the time, the monkey one day cut his own throat" (Leslau, 1962, p. 61).

Adult education faculty should not be involved in teacher preparation programs based on separate experiences and institutions

K-12 faculty and administrators often view education and schooling as synonymous terms. Adult educators focus on learning that is outside the K-12 framework. Adult education focuses on learning that takes place in homes, communities, and formal institutions such as the military and businesses. The differences in these types of institutions are great enough to warrant separate study and expertise. It may, in fact, be more relevant for adult education faculty to initiate and maintain alliances with faculty from other colleges, such as human resource development faculty in colleges of business than to try to connect to K-12 faculty within colleges of education.

Adult educators cannot continue to assert that they can be all things to all people. Adult education professors are not qualified to prepare teachers for the institutional constraints of schools. Professional development of teachers should be the province of K-12 faculty, with occasional consultations on how in-service could be tailored to fit the adult teacher's needs. But adult education faculty cannot and should not attempt to provide content for public school in-service activities since we have little in-depth knowledge of learning in elementary and secondary schools. In addition, adult education departments have served special populations not generally addressed in teacher preparation programs by designing ad hoc and cohort programs to serve specific communities.

One of the unique strengths of adult education departments is that they often provide additional revenue to colleges of education through entrepreneurial programs. Cohort graduate programs in adult education can provide visibility and money to shore up declining resources in colleges. Distance education programs are often attracting new enrollments, and in many colleges, it is the adult education faculty who are first to design and use distance technologies that make this possible. Thus adult educators should continue to emphasize learning outside public schools since these forms are distinct from K-12 education.

Conclusion

Finding a niche for adult education programs in colleges of education involves confronting tensions between these competing views and determining where compromises may be made. Crucial to either position is the inclusion of the concept of lifelong learning as a part of

a college of education's foundational mission. This dialogue may even be viewed as a positive element for the discipline of adult education, causing the field to continually clarify its purpose and reaffirm its philosophical beliefs about what adult education faculty do in the everyday world.

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